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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KCRM](#) [SMIG](#) [ELAB](#) [MA](#)
SUBJECT: MALAGASY SURPRISED BY TIP CONDITIONS IN SOUTH

REF: A) ANTANANARIVO 723 B) ANTANANARIVO 221

¶1. SUMMARY: In a July 25 meeting of the Human Rights Working Group, Embassy Antananarivo teamed up with multiple NGOs to present the issue of trafficking in persons (TIP) in the different regions of Madagascar. The fact that Malagasy participants were shocked to find out certain widespread practices constitute a form of modern slavery, and repeatedly confused prostitution with trafficking, shows we still have a way to go in raising public understanding. Embassy reporting on TIP in Fort Dauphin (REF A) in particular received extensive media coverage. Such field visits lend credibility to Embassy efforts to partner in the fight against TIP in Madagascar. END SUMMARY

THE LINE-UP

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¶2. Following an overview of the problem in Madagascar delivered by the Charge, Catholic Relief Services gave the first presentation on TIP in Nosy Be, Tamatave, and Tulear (REF B), showcasing U.S.-funded programs to raise awareness and assist victims in these areas. PolOff shared her observations about the small but growing underage sex trafficking problem in the mining town of Fort Dauphin. Local NGO "HIV/Alliance" talked about the growing HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infection rates among populations at risk for trafficking. The presentations were followed by relevant clips from the film "Human Trafficking" and a question-and-answer session.

PUBLIC AND MEDIA REACTION

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¶3. Despite extensive efforts by the Government of Madagascar and NGOs to raise public awareness about TIP, Malagasy participants were shocked to find certain widespread practices -- such as hiring young domestics and soliciting sex with underage prostitutes -- can constitute a form of modern slavery. In general, Malagasy participants at such events have a tendency to focus solely on sex trafficking, which they mistakenly equate with all forms of prostitution. To counter this, PolOff clarifies the definition of TIP at every event, emphasizes the Embassy concern with eradicating exploitative labor, and underscores labor trafficking cases. While most participants had at least heard about sex tourism in Nosy Be, Tamatave, and Tulear, they were particularly intrigued with the Embassy's report on Fort Dauphin, which has not yet been studied from a trafficking angle. In Antananarivo, rumors abound about the social impacts of mining activities in Fort Dauphin, and the discussion was a helpful opportunity for the Embassy to correct some misperceptions and convey information on the nature of TIP gleaned from sex workers themselves. While clips from the G/TIP-provided film, "Human Trafficking" were helpful in giving participants a jarring image of extreme sex trafficking, in the future PolOff will continue to seek audiovisual images of labor trafficking, which is

far more common in Madagascar.

¶4. The Embassy's presentation on Fort Dauphin in particular received extensive local media coverage and prompted international media reporting on related issues in Fort Dauphin. Although PolOff stressed the limited number of trafficking cases to date in this mining town, the headlines instead highlighted the rising prostitution among adolescent males -- a minor problem in reality but shocking in a country where homosexuality is largely taboo. Regardless, the coverage served the overall purpose of building awareness about TIP. Most reporting applauded the Embassy's initiative to "get out from behind the desk" and go out into the field.

COMMENT

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¶5. Post believes such field visits are crucial in talking to our contacts and the public about the nature of TIP in Madagascar. That Embassy staff took the initiative to speak with a range of local entities in Fort Dauphin -- including sex workers -- made our Malagasy contacts more receptive to our message. This initial visit to Fort Dauphin was clearly a milestone in terms of raising public awareness about a poorly understood problem. END COMMENT.

SIBLEY